

MEMORANDUM

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TO : The Honorable
John F. Kennedy
President of the United States of America

FROM : Senator Mike Mansfield

SUBJECT: Newspaper reports on mobilization in connection with the
Berlin situation.

July 17, 1961

Recent press reports suggest that the Administration is planning to ask up to \$6 or \$8 billions of increase in defense spending because of Berlin. There are also reports to the effect that military reserves will be called up and that some national guard units will be federalized. One report even specifies units, listing them as 1 from New England, 2 from the Midwest and 1 from Texas.

For whatever they may be worth, here are my reactions to these reports:

- (1) If the reports stem from authorized "leaks", I would have to question them on the grounds that the uncertainty which reports, as distinct from acts, stimulate among our own people is probably more damaging than any gain from the consternation which they may produce among our adversaries.
- (2) If the reports stem from unauthorized "leaks", then they are not only inexcusable, they portend great difficulties for us if the Berlin situation grows more delicate. The avoidance of irresponsibility of this kind was one of the points I emphasized in my earlier memo to you (copy enclosed). You will recall that I suggested a re-screening of men who might carry out military aspects of your policy in order to make certain that they had the highest sense of professional responsibility, and were "not given to politics or public relations. . ."

It seems to me that the essential need is to keep our shirts on in this situation and move with extreme caution on partial mobilization. It may be a necessary military measure, and as such will have to be taken. I am persuaded, however, to believe for the following reasons that there is an element of the game of "chicken" in proposals along these lines at this time:

- (1) If we, plus the British, French and NATO do not now have the wherewithal to meet "pin-pricks" at Berlin, it is highly unlikely that a partial mobilization in this country in the next 6 months will give it to us.

(2) If intelligence reports indicate that we are going to have to deal with a nuclear situation then partial mobilization loses its meaning. We should be talking of the whole works.

If it is believed that military--not propagandistic or "chicken"--reasons for partial mobilization will develop, then I believe that we should not only keep quiet about them until we act but we should put off the action until the last moment in which we can do so with reasonable safety. We have got to consider these aspects of partial mobilization.

Suppose we do call up more men, suppose we do increase expenditures \$6 or \$8 billions and Khrushchev then cools the whole thing off. It has been done before. While we cannot assume that he will do it again, it is not impossible. If that should happen, what are we going to do--demobilize, stop the expenditures? What will the political reaction of our own people be to the Administration and the party if this should happen?

Apart from the disrupting effect at home, I do not see that taking steps along the lines of those rumored in the press can affect the actual power situation at Berlin during the coming year. They will not, in my opinion, add in any way to convincing Mr. Khrushchev of our determination. And the effect of them on much of the rest of the world is likely to be negative.